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**Sean Holmes brings an explosion of Mardi Gras to the Globe in his modern-day adaptation
of the Shakespearean classic, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.**

In the realm of theater, William Shakespeare is known to be the most successful playwright of all time. Quite frankly, Shakespeare is the mastermind behind some of the most perennially popular plays in the history of dramatic theater. Among all of Shakespeare's notable works, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is deemed particularly enjoyable, in the sense that it is a comedy with a happy ending. In essence, it is a tale of fantasy, playfulness, and a complicated love triangle. Moreover, it is arguably distinctive, in that it follows the structure of a play within a play. The aforementioned aspects were touched upon in Sean Holmes' adaptation at the Globe Theater; however, as a means of distinguishing his work from the others, he put his spin on it. To elaborate, one would expect a production of the Globe to be more prestigious and sophisticated, yet it seemed that Holmes' unique interpretation resulted in a rather tacky and gaudy set design and costume collection. However, one must keep in mind that these aspects further supported and applied to the central theme of disorder.

The introduction of the show was a whirlwind of chaos. As a member of the audience, I observed a beautiful explosion of vibrant, fluorescent colors covering the stage, which had set an overall carnivalesque mood. To further enhance this idea, the Hackney Colliery Band - who also performed live throughout the night - opened the show with a short yet interactive musical number, wherein they invited one of my peers on stage to assume the role of the conductor.

Whilst giving off a comedic effect, it came as a surprise to me, as I had not expected this level of interaction between the audience and those on stage. The idea of chaos was further seen when a piñata dropped down out of nowhere, and three children were brought onto the stage to break it for the amusement of the audience.

The mise-en-scene remained to be overly exaggerated, which aligned

with the central theme of the play. Designer Jean Chan wholeheartedly put together a well thought out collection of ludicrous costumes for the entire team - from the protagonists of the show to the band members. Each character's costume held its own significance. For instance,



The fluorescent demeanor of fairy queen
Titania, played by Victoria Elliott.
Photograph: Tristram Kenton

Peter Bourke, who portrayed Oberon, the

Fairy King, was clad in a golden robe, almost resembling the shape of a chair. Furthermore, Victoria Elliott, who played the role of the Fairy Queen Titania, wore shiny azure-toned leggings paired with a knee-length, bubblegum-shaded dress and a whimsical pink ombre wig to top it off.

Both characters had some of the most eccentric and outrageous outfits, illustrating the fact that they are mythical creatures that exist solely in the world of fantasy. On the other hand, I found that the costumes of the protagonists - Hermia (Faith Omole), Helena (Amanda Wilkin), Lysander (Ekow Quartey) and



Oberon, played by Peter Bourke.
Photograph: Tristram Kenton



Hermia, played by Amanda Wilkin, and
Lysander, played by Ekow Quartey.
Photograph: Tristram Kenton

Demetrius (Ciaran O'Brien) - were underwhelming to some degree. While everybody else was dressed rather extravagantly, the lovers stuck to a purely monochromatic wardrobe throughout the play, with solely black and white costumes. However, this seemed to be the director's way of demonstrating the clear juxtaposition between their outfits and the complexity of their situation, seeing as they were battling a convoluted love triangle.

Audience participation continued to be a major aspect throughout the play. At one point, a group of crew members drove a buggy through the yard as a means of introducing Titania. Although this was a modern and memorable first appearance, the audience was forced to relocate themselves and their belongings for the vehicle to pass. In spite of the inconvenience, this act tied in well with the recurring notion of chaos and disorder, seeing as it instantly disrupted the peace among the crowd. Moreover, Billy Seymour, who played the role of the troublesome fairy Puck, consistently blended himself into the crowd and said his lines from the yard. Seymour actively interacted with the audience while performing, which personally made me feel as though I was a part of the production, despite not having a solid role. Finally, one of my favorite aspects of the adaptation was the fact that the cast allocated the role of Robin Starveling to a woman from the audience named Katarina. Even though she was a completely random choice, the crowd began to grow fond of her, even more so as the show progressed. I found that this degree of improv was carried out very well by the cast, as Katarina managed to deliver her lines appropriately, as well as contribute to the overall comedic effect.

Other than Katarina's unexpectedly impressive performance, comedic elements were used specifically to diminish the impact of serious scenes. I particularly found Helena's hysterical dialogue delivery to subtle sexual innuendos between Titania and the donkey quite hilarious. Additionally, I enjoyed the modern-day references to pop culture during the Pyramus and Thisbe segment, such as *The Lion King* and *Love Island*. I believe that these allusions appealed to the younger crowd in the audience, making the segment a lot more inclusive. Snug, portrayed by Rachel Hannah Clarke, played the role of a bashful turned courageous lion in Pyramus and Thisbe. To add to the comedic effect, Jocelyn Jee Eisen who played Bottom began to sing "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" from *The Lion King*. This led to the entire theater singing along while the cast danced around frivolously. Overall, this segment was lively, cheerful, and helped momentarily distract the audience from the conflict between the four lovers.



Rachel Hannah Clarke as the lion
in *Pyramus and Thisbe*.
Photograph: Tristram Kenton



The cast dressed as Puck during the final act.
Photograph: Tristram Kenton

The final act of the play can be described as a roller coaster of twists and confusion. What baffled me at first was the fact that the entire cast walked out onto the stage wearing a shirt that said "Puck," symbolizing the idea that each one had assumed the role of the mischievous shape-shifting fairy. It can be argued that Holmes' creative interpretation of Puck helped solidify the central idea of the play, seeing as Puck is meant to distract his

surroundings and cause mayhem in general, which was exactly what happened in the final scene.

Although, what I didn't quite resonate with was the fact that each character recited a line from Puck's final monologue from the original text. The part was divided up and structured in a sort of domino effect manner, wherein characters would spit darts on each other to get a chance to speak. Although this may be considered as innovative, I found it to be an unsuitable way to end the play. Granted, the entire show was modernized and was successful for the most part, but it seems that a traditional ending would have been more ideal.

Sean Holmes' adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was definitely not what I was expecting, especially since it was a production of the Globe Theater. However, in recent years, the Globe has attempted to renovate its image by way of coming across as more progressive, innovative and accepting. This was prevalent in the show's racially diverse cast, as well as the purely non-traditional mise-en-scene. Due to this, I felt as though the notion of chaos and disorder was conveyed more appropriately. For the most part, I was satisfied and impressed by the performance; however, I would have preferred Puck to single-handedly close the show to retain the original meaning and intentions.

Work Cited (Pictures):

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www.shakespearesglobe.com/whats-on/a-midsummer-nights-dream-2019/#photos-videos.